

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Listing of Claims

1-3 (Canceled).

4. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure, said initial temperature being the temperature of the polymer electrolyte membrane and the first and second gas diffusion electrodes before exposure of the positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes to said step of heating; and

(c) thereafter, once said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature while under said first pressure, applying to said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes a bonding pressure higher than said first pressure.

5. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes from an initial temperature up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure until said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes reach said bonding temperature; and

(c) thereafter, once said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to

said bonding temperature in step (b), applying a second pressure to said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes, said second pressure being higher than said first pressure, wherein:

said second pressure is a bonding pressure sufficient to bond said polymer electrolyte membrane and said first and second gas diffusion electrodes at said bonding temperature.

6. (New) The method as in claim 5, wherein said second pressure is applied while said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second electrodes are at said bonding temperature.

7. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure; and

(c) thereafter, once but not before said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature in step (b), applying a second pressure to said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes, said second pressure being higher than said first pressure, wherein:

said second pressure is a bonding pressure sufficient to bond said polymer electrolyte membrane and said first and second gas diffusion electrodes at said bonding temperature.

8. (New) The method as in claim 7, wherein said second pressure is applied while said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second electrodes are at said bonding temperature.

9. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

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(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure until said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes reach said bonding temperature; and

(c) thereafter, once but not before said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature in step (b), applying a second pressure to said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes, said second pressure being higher than said first pressure, wherein:

said second pressure is a bonding pressure sufficient to bond said polymer electrolyte membrane and said first and second gas diffusion electrodes at said bonding temperature.

10. (New) The method as in claim 9, wherein said second pressure is applied while said polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second electrodes are at said bonding temperature.

11. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion

electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure, said initial temperature being the temperature of the polymer electrolyte membrane and the first and second gas diffusion electrodes before exposure of the positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes to said step of heating; and

(c) thereafter, once said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature while under said first pressure, increasing a pressure applied to said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes to a second pressure that is higher than said first pressure and that is a bonding pressure.